

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 10230

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TAGS: PINT KS
SUBJ: SLIGHT STIRRINGS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

REF: (A) SEOUL 8331, (B) SEOUL 9681, (C) SEOUL 9321

SUMMARY: THREE PROTEST ACTIVITIES HAVE OCCURRED DURING THE FALL SCHOOL TERM ATTESTING TO SOME STUDENTS' TO ONCE AGAIN OPENLY CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT. DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY SMALL AND QUICKLY CONTAINED BY ROK HOWEVER, AND DESPITE EXPECTATIONS OF MORE ACTIVITY IN SPRING IN SOME QUARTERS, WE ANTICIPATE GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP STUDENT ACTIVISTS WELL UNDER CONTROL. END SUMMARY.

1. CAMPUS QUIET WHICH HAS CONTINUED SINCE THE LATE SPRING OF 1975 WAS BROKEN BY THREE MINOR INCIDENTS DURING THE JUST COMPLETED FALL SHCOOL TERM. THE LATEST INCIDENT OCCURRED AT YONSEI UNIVERSITY ON 14 DECEMBER WHEN HUNDREDS OF LEAFLETS WERE SCATTERED ABOUT THE CAMPUS. THE POLICE WERE CALLED OUT AND WHATEVER DEMONSTRATION MAY HAVE BEEN PLANNED WAS ABORTED; NO ARRESTS WERE MADE. EARLIER INCIDENTS OCCURRED, AS REPORTED REFTELS, AT SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (SNU) WHERE THERE WERE SMALL ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS OCTOBER 15 AND DECEMBER 8 WHICH WERE QUICKLY CONTAINED.
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2. DEMANDS MADE BY THE STUDENTS IN ALL INSTANCES WERE SIMILAR. ALONG WITH THE TRADITIONAL CALLS FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE YUSHIN CONSTITUTION AND REPEAL OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NUMBER 9, STUDENTS SOUGHT RELEASE OF PRISONERS HELD ON HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED CHARGES. IN DECEMBER INCIDENTS THEY

ADDED DEMANDS FOR A FULL ACCOUNTING OF THE BRIBERY SCANDALS IN THE U.S. ALTHOUGH ALL ACCOUNTS OF THE SCANDALS HAVE BEEN CENSORED IN THE LOCAL PRESS, STUDENTS WERE AWARE OF THE ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING PRESIDENT PAK CHONG-HUI'S ROLE IN THE SCANDAL AND BUGGING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MANSION.

3. ACCORDING FACULTY CONTACTS AT SNU LAW SCHOOL, BASIC CAUSE OF OUTBREAKS WAS LATENT HOSTILITY OF SOME STUDENTS TOWARD GOVERNMENT AND MORE PARTICULARLY PENT-UP FRUSTRATION OVER RESTRICTIONS ON STUDENT ACTIVITY MAINTAINED SINCE LATE SPRING, 1975 AFTER FALL OF INDO-CHINA. STUDENTS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN TESTING APPARENT SLIGHT EASING OF POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THAT SHOWED UP IN NOVEMBER (REF C) AND GOVERNMENT'S VULNERABILITY TO CRITICISM OVER SCANDALS.

4. AS FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAKS, IT HAS IN FACT BEEN RELATIVELY MODERATE, ALTHOUGH IT STIFFENED IN THE CASE OF THE DECEMBER 8 INCIDENT. THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONVINCED THAT THE FIRST DEMONSTRATION AT SNU IN OCTOBER WAS SPONTANEOUS AND KEPT ITS PROMISE THAT THE STUDENTS INVOLVED WOULD BE TREATED LENIENTLY. FACT GOVERNMENT HAS MADE NO ARRESTS IN YONSEI LEAFLET CASE CONTRASTS WITH NUMEROUS EM-9 ARRESTS MADE AFTER SIMILAR LEAFLET INCIDENTS IN SPRING/SUMMER OF 1975. THERE IS STILL A FIRM BOTTOM LINE ON WHAT ROKG WILL COUNTENANCE HOWEVER, AND THE FIVE STUDENTS ARRESTED AFTER THE MORE DEMONSTRATIVE DECEMBER 8 OUTBREAK REPORTEDLY CAN EXPECT FULL PROSECUTION UNDER THE EMERGENCY MEASURE.

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5. RENEWED DISTURBANCES RAISE QUESTION WHETHER THERE WILL BE MORE TO COME. WITH CLOSING OF SCHOOLS FOR WINTER VACATION NO RENEWED STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS EXPECTED UNTIL NEXT SPRING WHEN SCHOOLS AGAIN REOPEN. LOCAL STUDENT WATCHERS NOW BELIEVE ADVENT OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION TOGETHER WITH BASIC CAUSES STUDENT DISCONTENT WILL ADD IMPETUS TO TRADITIONAL URGE TO DEMONSTRATE IN SPRING. NEITHER THEY NOR WE SEE ANY INDICATION HOWEVER, THAT THESE FEELINGS LIABLE TO CRYSTALLIZE IN OPEN CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND STUDENTS.

6. FIRST OF ALL DEPTH AND BREADTH OF STUDENT FEELINGS IS PROBLEMATIC. SMALL SIZE AND SHORT DURATION OF THIS FALL'S DEMONSTRATIONS RELATIVE TO 1973/1974 PERIOD OF UNIVERSITY UPHEAVALS IS NOTABLE. SNU PROFESSORS HAVE ALSO COMMENTED THAT CONTRARY TO 1973/74 MOST RECENT DEMONSTRATORS WERE LED BY COLLEGE SENIORS, THE ONLY STUDENTS NOW LEFT WHO EXPERIENCED 1973/74 PERIOD ON CAMPUSES, AND THAT CONTRARY TO PAST GREAT MAJORITY OF STUDENTS AT

SNU ARE NOW DOUBTFUL ABOUT EFFICACY OF OPEN CHALLENGES TO PAK
REGIME.

7. AS FOR GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE IT IS INTERESTING THAT NEW
EDUCATION MINISTER HWANG SAN-DUK, WHO WIDELY RESPECTED BY
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, WAS REPORTED IN PRESS AS SAYING DAY
BEFORE CHRISTMAS THAT HE WILL ATTEMPT TO FREE SCHOOLS FROM
OUTSIDE INFLUENCES, THAT "STUDENTS CAN ENJOY AS MUCH
FREEDOM AS POSSIBLE IN THEY ABIDE BY GOVERNMENT POLICY OF
NATION SECURITY," AND THAT HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO CORRECT
EXISTING "MONALITHIC ADMINISTRATION" OF SCHOOLS. WHILE
THERE IS OLIVE BRANCH QUALITY IN THESE STATEMENTS, THAT MAY
EVEN ENCOURAGE SOME STUDENTS (AND FACULTY) TO BELIEVE THEY WILL
BE GIVEN MORE LEEWAY TO DEMONSTRATE BY GOVERNMENT, HWANG AND
OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO MAKE CLEAR THAT
ROKG HAS NO INTENTION COUNTENANCING DEMONSTRATIVE OUTBREAKS IN
SPRING. MOREOVER, THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT ROKG CONTINUES
TO HAVE SUFFICIENT POLITICAL SUPPORT AND ALL THE MEANS REQUIRED TO
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INSURE CONTINUED, RELATIVE CALM ON THE CAMPUS.
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